Los Angeles County Fire Department Fire Chief
Daryl L. Osby

WHAT IS A RIP CURRENT?

As breaking waves push water to shore, the water will travel back out to sea at a point of least resistance forming a "rip current" - a narrow, river like current, flowing away from shore through the surf line, past breaking waves. The key ingredient to the formation of rip currents is breaking waves. Rip currents can occur at any beach with breaking waves and the bigger the waves, the bigger the rip currents.

Panicked swimmers often try to counter a rip current by swimming straight back to shore—putting themselves at risk of drowning because of fatigue. The vast majority of rescues made by lifeguards are a result of rip currents. In fact, rip currents are the leading hazard to beach goers.

RIP CURRENT ESCAPE PLAN

- Remain calm
- Tread water and float
- If you have a bodyboard or surfboard stay on it
- Get the attention of a Lifeguard or a bystander who can inform a Lifeguard
- If you feel like you are able to self-rescue, swim parallel to shore first to get out of the rip current before swimming in to shore

HOW CAN YOU BEST AVOID RIP CURRENTS?

- Always check with the Lifeguard
- Swim in front of an open Lifeguard tower and use swim flags.

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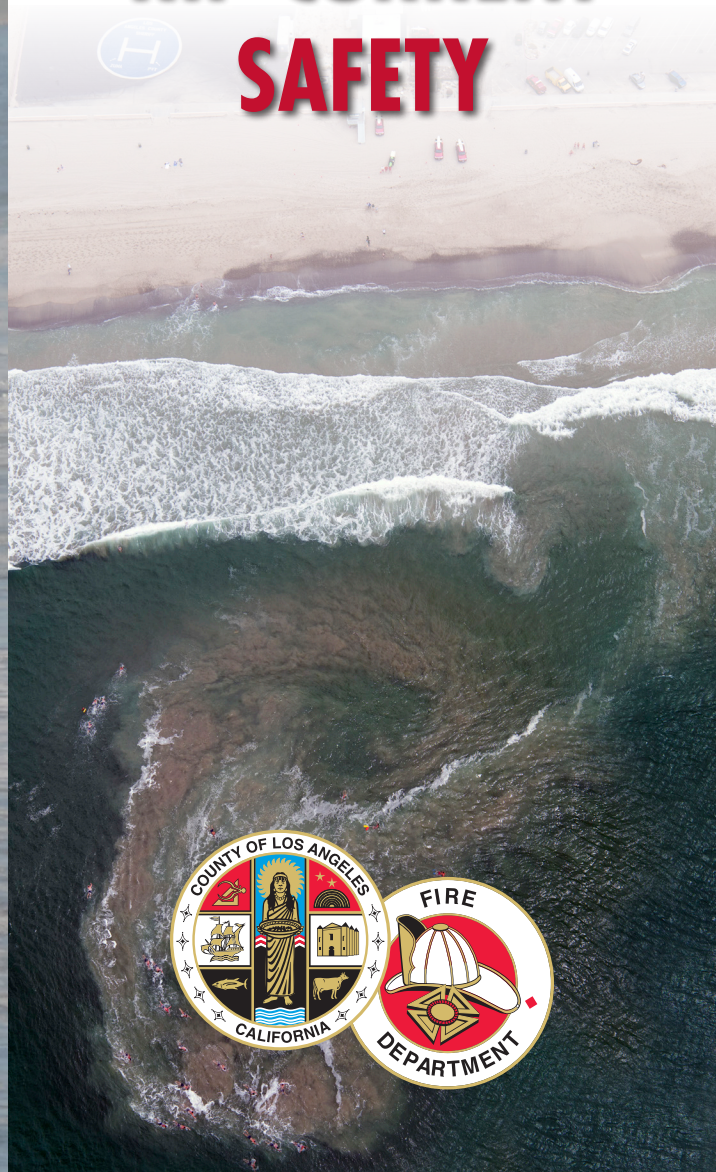
For more information about rip currents and other beach hazards please visit:

https://www.fire.lacounty.gov/lifeguard

(310) 939 - 7200

RIP CURRENT SAFETY

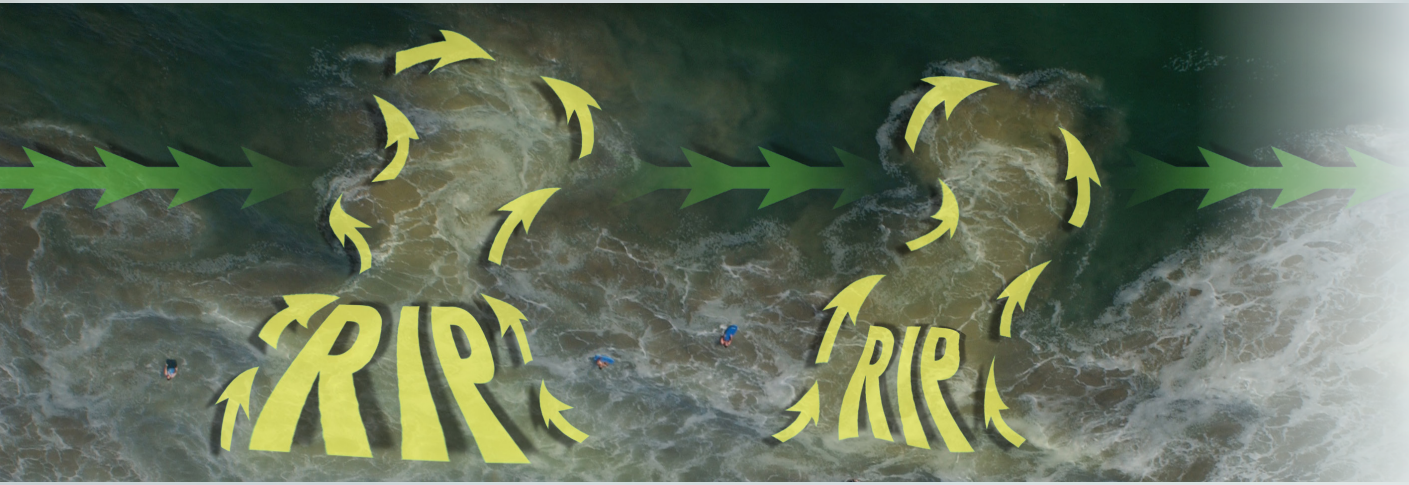


HOLE RIPS

- Forms in deeper water
- Water flows out through a deep channel between or alongside sandbars
- Waves will rarely be able to break in a hole rip
- Water often looks deceptively calm in the affected area while waves will continue to break on the sandbars adjacent
- Channel can get deeper as rip current persists

STRUCTURE RIPS

- Similar charactersitics to hole rips
- Forms as water gathers at the base of piers, jetties, and groins
- Water will flow out in a deep channel along one or both sides of the structure
- The structure itself poses as an additional hazard
- Structure rips can pull out further than the structure itself



SWEEPING RIPS

- Can form anywhere at any time along the beach
- Most display with foamy, churning, sandy water being carried out to sea
- Unlike most other rips, waves can and do break in a sweeping rip
- Has the capability to pull out even in shallow water
- Travels with the lateral current up the beach
- Similar to a tornado, it can appear suddenly and picks up anything in its path